

Stranded

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Summary: Trapped in a swamp, a group of marines must fight for their lives against the Flood, and their Sergeant must hold on to his sanity. Reclaimers Trilogy part 1

1. Default Chapter

****Disclaimer:** **I do not own HALO® or anything involved with HALO®, I am simply a fan who enjoys the universe BUNGIE® has created.

****Author's Note:**** This story takes place during Halo 2, and contains some spoilers for those who haven't beaten it yet. You have been warned.

**Stranded **

Prologue: Delta Halo

"Cortana, what exactly am I looking at?" Captain Miranda Keyes asked of the AI.

"That, is another Halo," Cortana responded simply.

"Say what?" Sgt. Johnson sputtered over the intercom.

"So this is what my father found," Miranda said, leaning forward in her chair.

As the captain broke out of her wonder, she began to give orders. Lieutenant Jonathon Wesley continued to look at the magnificent ring world floating in space before IN AMBER CLAD. He had to get on that ring. As a agent of ONI it was his duty to find all the information he could on it.

There were sudden thumps that emanated from the bottom of the ship. Jonathon snapped himself from his thoughts and concentrated on the

real world. He realized what had happened, they had launched drop pods. Probably that freak, Master Chief, and some ODSTs. Jonathon had to get on that ring.

"Captain, I request to go to the surface," Jonathon said to Captain Keyes, going for respect and manners first.

Miranda looked at him in his uniform. The black leathery material was so clean that it shined. His coat came down around the back of his legs, and the cap on his head was trimmed in gold. There was the ONI insignia on his chest, and a silver zipper, but other than that it was clean of decorum.

"Very well, join Platoon 6, but remember that Sgt. Little is in command of the marines, not you," Miranda responded to his request, knowing full well that ONI agents usually tried to sneak themselves into top authority.

"Yes Captain," Jonathon replied, and turned.

* * *

>In the ship's armory, Platoon 6 was suiting up. Each marine donned Tactical armor and helmets, grabbed some grenades and shoved them into pouches on their hips. Each soldier was given M6C pistol for their sidearm, and they took a heavier weapon that would suit their role on the battlefield. <p>Sgt. Nathan Little loaded his BR55 battle rifle, and looked over his platoon. It was a small group, as it had seen some heavy fighting on Earth before IN AMBER CLAD followed the Covenant ship through slip space.

Pvt. Danny Connors, Pvt. Sara Dedrick, Cpl. Hank Thompson the sniper, Pvt. Gary Potter the rocket trooper, Pvt. Amy Jackson armed with a shotgun as well as a regular battle rifle, Pvt. Jim Wesson, and Cpl. Mike Rogers who had an SMG strapped to his hip.

All the marines grabbed as much ammo as they could carry, they didn't know when they would get a chance to rearm and reload.

Then the intercom buzzed.

"_Sgt. Little, this is the captain, I'm placing Lt. Wesley in your platoon_," Miranda said, then the intercom clicked off.

"Son of a bitch, I hate ONI," Jim yelled, kicking the wall.

"Don't we all," Nathan said with a frown. Nathan had heard all about ONI agents, most didn't have any real combat experience at all, and that could endanger the lives of the marines.

He would follow his orders, but he didn't like it, and he couldn't shake the feeling that something bad was going to happen, and soon.

"Okay guys, report to the docking bays, we're expected on the surface soon enough. Let's show these alien bastards why you don't screw around with the marines," Nathan called out.

The marines in the room cheered, raising clenched fists into the air in a cry of defiance.

The platoon left the armory and marched through the corridors of IN AMBER CLAD to the docking bay. They weren't supposed to leave just yet, so the marines went about the bay to help out wherever they could.

Nathan though, had been found by Lieutenant Wesley. The ONI agent walked right up in front of the marine sergeant. Nathan immediately disliked him. The man was arrogant, and he carried himself like the hero that saved a thousand worlds. He was clean, not a single hair on his face, and acted like his shit was golden and smelt of roses. He was slightly taller than Nathan, and, looked down at the sergeant like he was an annoying little child that wanted attention.

"Sgt. Little I presume," Wesley said, stamping on an obviously fake smile and holding out his hand.

"I'm going to tell you something here and now, sir. I will not let these marines die to serve your own needs, and you are not in command. This is my platoon, and despite your rank, it's still mine," Nathan said, looking the man in the eyes with a steel gaze, and didn't back down. He completely ignored the offered hand.

Nathan saw a wave of uncertainty pass over the Lieutenant's features, but all traces of it were quickly erased. The man lowered his hand, and looked around to make sure no one had seen that.

"Don't get in my way Sgt. I have a duty to perform here," Wesley said, and with that walked away, his coat snapping slightly as he spun on his heel.

Nathan watched him leave, then turned back to his own troops. He had already decided, if Wesley tried anything at all, he would kill the ONI agent.

* * *

>Wesley fumed as he walked through the corridors, making sure not to stray too far from the docking bay. He tried to keep a calm face, but the Sgt. Could be a problem. If he got in Wesley's way, he would have an accident that would shorten his life span dramatically. <p>Wesley managed to smile.<p>

2. Stranded Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Marching as to War

The hum of the Pelican dropship filled Nathan's ears as the craft flew over the surface of Delta Halo, drowning out the blaring music coming from the headphones Jim wore. He nodded his head in time with the beat that no one else could hear. The others just sat back, trying to relax, but it was always unnerving heading into battle, and now they were fighting in unfamiliar territory.

Nathan looked over his troops. The ONI agent sitting across from him had everyone unnerved, except for Mike who was fast asleep, his helmet pulled down over his eyes. The man had a calmness about him that was chilling.

Wesley had his false smile pasted on his face, trying to make friends. It wasn't working, as everyone ignored him.

The remains of Platoon 6 were being inserted just a kilometre away from a Forerunner complex where Cortana believed the architect was located. The only problem was that the Covenant were already there, so there would be some fighting.

Nathan wished he had the Master Chief with him. That man had done this before, he'd be able to smash right through any defenses the Covenant had for them, but the Spartan warrior was needed elsewhere, so Platoon 6 got the job.

"I always thought platoons were made up of a fair amount of marines, this is about squad size. So where is everyone else?" Wesley asked, shouting over the pelican's engines.

"Hey, asshole. Keep pushing and you get a bullet in the face," Sara said, touching the butt of her pistol to emphasize her point.

Wesley's smile faded for just a second, and Nathan could see fear in his expression, but it was quickly shoved away making room for his regular fake smile and arrogant expression. Nathan shook his head in disgust.

"You wouldn't dare shoot an ONI officer, you'd be court marshaled and executed," Wesley said.

"Try me," Sara said, and her lips stretched out in a sick smile of bloodlust.

"Why you little bi—" Wesley started.

"Enough. We have to go into battle, and I'd rather we save the fight for the aliens," Nathan yelled.

Sara sat back, still smiling, and Wesley crossed his arms, fuming, staring at the Sgt. with utter fury. Nathan met that stare with his own eyes. The ONI agent could see the steel will behind those eyes, but he also saw the sorrow. He remembered looking at Sgt. Little's record.

Though he was loath to admit it, it was fairly impressive. The man had once taken out a pair of hunters with only two pistols and a grenade. Using the grenade he had found a new method of killing Hunters that his platoon had called the 'Little Boom'. Wesley knew the Sgt. had fought on Earth over the past few days, but his records weren't updated, so the ONI agent had no idea what the man had done recently.

Wesley managed to calm himself down, and his smile was soon back on his face. They would be landing soon.

* * *

>The pelican's whine shifted as it lowered to the ground. Its landing gear lowered, and the craft touched the ground softly, despite its large size. Then the back hatch opened, and the marines all got up, and disembarked. <p>Amy went first, her shotgun probing through the

confining shrubs of the jungle they had just landed in. Hank, the sniper, separated himself from the group, and silently entered the trees of the jungle, Nathan had no doubt the man would be able to find his own way to the complex.<p>

As one the platoon of marines moved through the jungle, ignoring the vines that snaked down from the branches of the trees that towered above them. Wesley was trying his best to be quiet, but he had no experience, and made Nathan almost wish they had been dropped off right in front of the complex.

For about a half-hour they slowly made their way through the jungle, each marine grimacing whenever Wesley snapped a twig, or rustled a branch. Eventually they reached the edge of the jungle. Just ahead of them was a ridge with a natural dirt ramp slightly off to the side. Atop the ridge was a two story metallic structure. Grunts were patrolling just along the top of the ridge. A single elite stood in front of the structure.

"This is it. Hank, you in position?" Nathan asked over the personal radio everyone carried.

"Yes," Hank breathed, barely audible.

"Okay guys, let's kick some alien ass," Nathan said, waving his hand forward.

The marines burst from the jungle foliage, startling the grunts. The elite reacted immediately though, and ignited an energy sword, and caught a sniper bullet in the face. Purple blood splattered across the structure and the elite fell to the ground lifeless.

Nathan and Danny brought their battle rifles to their shoulders as the other marines charged for the ramp. The rifles immediately began firing, and the bullets tore through the grunts standing sentry. Some of their corpses fell from the ridge and landed on the ground below with a dull thud.

The sound of another shot from the sniper rifle, and the clearly visible bullet line showed that another elite had emerged from the structure and was now laying dead beside it's brother.

The marines were on top of the ridge. A grunt jumped on a plasma turret placed atop the complex, and began to swivel it to gun down the marines, who didn't see it. Except for Gary, who was kneeling on the ground, a rocket launcher on his shoulder.

The grunt had fully swiveled the turret, but let out a scream as it saw the rocket flying directly at it.

The marines ignored the resulting explosion, and ran towards the building that housed the architect. As they approached, a cloaked elite began firing at them. The plasma bolts sped towards Danny, whose amazing reflexes allowed him to roll out of the way. Nathan fired a burst from his rifle, hitting the nearly invisible elite. It's shields flared, and Hank took the shot, hitting the alien in the chest. It was thrown against the wall as it became fully visible. It's lifeless form slid down to rest face first on the ground, leaving a trail of blood on the wall.

The marines walked up to the entrance. As the marines entered, Sara stopped the kick the third elite's corpse a few times, before entering with the rest of the platoon.

* * *

>"Stay put Hank, make sure nothing comes in behind us," Nathan told the sniper over the radio. <p>"Roger that sir," Hank responded.<p>

Confident that his ass was covered, Nathan ordered the platoon to move in. As the marines walked cautiously down the metallic hallways, Nathan threw a glance towards Wesley, who still walked with an arrogant, pompous stride, though he hadn't fired a shot getting into the complex. He really wasn't worth the trouble to bring along.

The marines were suddenly out of the cramped hallways, and had entered a large room. There were some long metal plates in the room that came up to a man's waste, then there was a chasm that cut through the centre of the room with only two thin looking bridges to get across.

And there were Covenant.

"Behind the plates, take cover," Nathan commanded, and the marines did so, but the first man to safety was Wesley.

Sara poked her rifle over the top of the plate, and fired a burst. She heard grunts scream, so she brought her head up so she could see where she was shooting. She fired an entire magazine before anything fired back, and it was a grunt with a needler.

"Shit," she yelled, ducking as glowing pink shards flew at her face. The top of her helmet was still above the plate, and the needles hit it, bounced off, flew into the air and popped above the marines.

"Holy crap, they actually work," Jim said with a laugh, referring to the helmets.

"Okay, lets kill them," Nathan said, and stood, firing his rifle in the same movement. The other marines followed suit. Wesley watched the carnage in mute amazement as the grunt corpses were torn apart by the bullets, their bright blue blood spraying across the shining metal floors of the complex.

The marines reloaded their weapons, and walked across the bridges. After that room, there were more hallways, leading deeper underground. They met a few jackals after a minute, but the bird like aliens were quickly gunned down by the marines. Then the platoon moved on.

Quickly they came to the end of the twisting hallway, and were in front of a door.

"I think this is it guys," Nathan said.

"Damn well better be," Jim muttered darkly, and Danny went forward. The door automatically opened, revealing a massive hologram of halo in a large room. And a really pissed off elite standing by the

console.

"Shit," Danny said, as the elite's plasma rifle fired. The plasma bolts struck the young marine across the chest, and his unarmored shoulder. Danny screamed, and the elite was about to finish the human before it off, when it noticed a grenade fly in through the door.

It growled, just before it detonated, and sent the alien flying through the air to crumble in a heap in the shadows.

The platoon gathered around Danny. Amy pulled out a knife and cut the smoldering fatigues away from the burnt flesh. The armor had only stopped a few bolts, some got through and would have killed him if another one or two hit him in the same area. His shoulder was almost burnt away entirely, unprotected as it was.

"Holy fuck man, it stinks," Jim cried out, clamping a hand over his face to stifle the stench.

As the marines did their best to bandage Danny, Wesley walked past them to stare at the hologram.

"What is it?" he asked.

Nathan walked up beside him, surprised at the man's ignorance, he was ONI after all.

"That is the architect. It's a map," Nathan replied, he had found what they had come for, but it may have come at the price of another marine's life. He already had too much blood on his hands, he didn't need Danny's.

Author's Note: Due to the content that could very well be appearing in this story, and also due to the new rating system, I may be rating this fiction as M. I will listen to any reviews that suggest otherwise.

3. Stranded Chapter 2

Author's Note: Okay, I really hope that everyone is enjoying this so far. When the next chapter is uploaded however, I will be upping the rating to 'M', just so you know where to find it.

Chapter 2: Earning Their Pay

Nathan immediately began to study the map, but he couldn't make sense of it. There was writing, but all in a language he had never seen before. The language of the Forerunners. Nathan stroked his jaw, feeling the coarse stubble that had grown there for the past few days.

"Sgt., we have to get Danny out of here, he's not doing too well," Gary called from the doorway. Nathan looked back over his shoulder to see Amy applying biofoam to the wounds, but it wouldn't be enough. Danny was not a Spartan.

He pulled a data transmitter from his pocket, and walked up to the console that sat before the hologram of Halo. He inserted the transmitter where one would place an AI chip. The transmitter would

send the information showed by the hologram directly to _IN AMBER CLAD_. Nathan keyed his radio.

"_IN AMBER CLAD_ this is Sgt. Little of Platoon 6. The transmitter is in place, and sending the information your way. Requesting pick-up," Nathan said.

"_Nathan, this is _IN AMBER CLAD_. We're receiving the information, and our computers have already located the Library. We're sending you a pelican so you can meet us there. _IN AMBER CLAD_ out_," a voice said over the radio, Nathan wasn't sure who it was, he turned to his marines.

"Okay guys, it looks like we'll be getting into the thick of it yet again. I'll see if I can get you out of here Danny, but you'll need to hang on for just a little while longer," Nathan said, reaching for the data transmitter.

"Leave it," Wesley said, putting his hand over Nathan's preventing the Sgt. from removing the transmitter.

"Lt. we need to take this out. If any Covenant come in here after they can access _IN AMBER CLAD_'s databanks," Nathan said.

"That's a risk I'm willing to take. They already know everything about us. Weapons, tactics, Earth. But we don't know much about Halo or the Forerunners, this is our chance. Think of the knowledge we could gain from this, we could use it to win this war," Nathan said, a dreamy look in his eyes.

"I'm not willing to take that risk Lt., there's too much at stake to be fucking around," Nathan said, and pulled the transmitter out, even though Wesley put all his strength into preventing it.

"Very well Sgt. but don't think I'll forget this," Wesley said with a hateful glare. Nathan matched that stare with equal intensity and loathing.

The marines were once again marching through the halls, now stained with Covenant blood. Amy and Mike supported Danny's weight between the two of them, and they made good speed.

"Hank, how's the landing look?" Nathan asked over the radio.

"_Clear_," the sniper responded simply, quietly.

Nathan nodded, though he knew Hank couldn't see him. Wesley fumed, staring at Nathan's back, wanting to put a bullet through his head. This man could cost him everything.

They had just passed the room with the chasm when the radio flickered to life, and Hank's voice came through it.

"_Sir, Covenant dropship just dropped off a pair of Hunters on the ridge. Be ready for them_," the sniper reported, speaking even more quietly than before, Nathan had to listen carefully just to here.

"Okay, two Hunters on the ridge guys. Lets be ready for them," Nathan

said to his troops, and behind him, Wesley smiled.

They made it to the entrance. Amy and Mike propped Danny against a wall, and left Jim and Wesley to look after him. Nathan and the others crawled out of the complex, and hid behind short walls that came up to a man's chest. The Hunters didn't know that the marines were there. Not yet anyway.

"Okay, you guys know the drill, lets do it," Nathan said, and the marines present grinned.

In the complex, Wesley scratched his neck as he looked out into the sunlight.

"They are in position," he said quietly.

"I don't want any commentary, just make sure that Danny boy doesn't die on me," Jim said, checking the wounded marine's pulse.

"Of course," Wesley said with that smile that Jim hated so much.

Outside, the marines were about to move when the Hunters both fired at the same time. Their fuel rod cannons hit the stone wall, and destroyed a piece of it. Gary went flying backwards and smashed against the complex wall.

He coughed, and signified he was alright, by moving to a safer location, but his rocket launcher had been ruined by the explosion, the firing tube had been crumpled.

"Fuck," he said, and threw the ruined weapon over the short wall.

"Alright, we go to plan two. Who volunteers?" Nathan asked.

Amy and Mike immediately nodded. Nathan sucked on his bottom lip thinking how he was going to do this, when he remember Hank.

"Hank, take a shot at the Hunters," Nathan said, knowing full well that the shot wouldn't be able to kill the leviathans, but it would distract them.

Hank responded by firing. Nathan pointed for Mike and Amy to move, which they did, quietly, and quickly, and made their way to circle around the hunters, hiding behind shrubs and ancient debris.

The Hunters fired into the jungle where they assumed the sniper was hiding, when Sara, Nathan, and Gary popped up behind them, and fired a few bursts into their backs. They saw some bright orange blood spray out in front of the monsters, but they seemed to just get angrier.

They turned, and Sara flipped them the finger, before all three ducked as the Hunters fired their massive lasers at them again. The green bolts of death smashed into the wall of the complex, raining chunks of rock on the marines, who tried to cover themselves with their hands, and by curling into a ball.

The dust cleared, and Nathan shook his head, ignoring the cut across

the back of his hand caused by a larger piece of stone. Most of it had bounced off his armor and helmet though, same with the others, so they were fine save some cuts and bruises.

"Hurry up guys," Nathan said over his radio.

Amy and Mike both managed to sneak up behind the Hunters. Amy readied her shotgun, and Mike primed a grenade. They came up right behind the Hunters, and they both acted at the same time.

Mike plunged his hand, holding the live grenade, through the hive of worms that made up a Hunter's flesh. He left the grenade inside the alien, and he ran backwards. The Hunter roared and began to turn, to kill the annoying human.

Amy just pressed her shotgun against the exposed flesh of the Hunter's back, and fired. The Hunter stumbled forward, but wasn't dead yet, so Amy pumped her weapon, stepped up, and fired again. The Hunter fell forward, dead, its blood splattered across the ground.

The remaining Hunter roared when it saw its comrade fall. It pointed its fuel rod cannon at Amy, and was about to fire when Mike's grenade detonated. Pieces of flesh, and blood flew everywhere, and the hunter fell, as just a pile of armor and a puddle of blood.

Amy wiped some of the orange fluid from her face, and flicked her hand to get the horribly smelling gunk off of her. Mike crawled back onto the ridge and offered an apologetic shrug, still totally calm.

"You son of a bitch," Amy muttered.

The marines all gathered on the small plateau, and waited for the pelican to arrive. They sat around for about ten minutes, keeping Danny alive. Then the pelican arrived. It came in over the trees of the jungle, and landed on the plateau. The back hatch opened and the squad piled in. Nathan walked into the cockpit, to talk with the pilot.

"We have a wounded marine back here who needs to be taken back to IN AMBER CLAD," he said, leaning on the door frame.

"Sorry sir, we have to bring you guys to the Library first. Apparently the shit has really hit the fan and they need reinforcements badly. We can take the WIA back to the ship after we drop you guys off," the pilot responded.

Nathan nodded, and walked back to the troop compartment to tell Danny that he would have to wait for a little bit. The marine managed to smile.

"Back into the thick of it. I wouldn't have it any other way," Sara said with her evil grin.

"I would like to make myself a hero today anyway, let's kick some more alien ass," Jim said, causing Gary to chuckle to himself.

"You're already heroes, let's just try to get back in one piece to

save our families the grief," Nathan said.

"Except for Jimmy, who manages to get a new girlfriend every time we go on leave, and get dumped before we have to go back on duty, I'm sure there'll be a celebration when you bite it," Gary said, getting the other marines to laugh.

"Fuck you man," Jim said, extending the middle finger thank-you note.

When the laughter died down, Nathan could hear a sudden beeping noise. He looked to the cockpit, where the pilot was tapping the console.

"What the fuck, this area is supposed to be clear of Covenant. Shit, I've got a missile lock on me," the pilot said.

Suddenly there was an explosion, and it ripped the back hatch off of the pelican. Nathan looked out to see the hatch fall away behind them, with one of the engines.

"Fuck, we're going down," the pilot screamed.

Another explosion rocked the dropship, and Nathan saw the right wing fly past the opened hatch. He looked out the cockpit window, and could see the mist shrouded trees of the swamp rushing towards them.

He started breathing heavily, then he could hear tearing metal, and screaming. Then there was only silent blackness.

4. Stranded Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Haze

Reach was a beautiful planet. Less populated, polluted, and industrialized than Earth was. Everything had a natural beauty to it, and today was no different. A cloudless sky, with only the sun to contrast the blue. The strong ozone layer that hadn't peeled away protected the inhabitants of the planet, and a slight summer's breeze kept it cool.

Sgt. Nathan Little though, wished the sky was filled with dark gray clouds, and pouring rain, blocking the beauty of the sun. With strong winds that mocked the very essence of life. All to fit his mood.

He had come home. After six years on the frontlines of the war against the Covenant, he had come home. But his welcome was less than warm.

"You think you can just walk back into my life after being gone for six years. You never wrote, you rarely sent e-mails. Now you think you can just come strutting back in here like you own the place," Shelly, Nathan's wife yelled at him. Nathan's mind reeled in confusion. He did own the house, what had happened?

She had been seeing someone else, had been for two years, and when Nathan came home, she shoved the divorce papers into his hands. He read them, his mind whirling in a state of shock. How could this have happened, he explained to her that he had no choice but to go and

fight, and that he would rarely get to write to her. Shelly though, didn't care.

Nathan went to see his son. But Shelly refused to let her son be around him. Nathan had no visitation rights, and she had taken everything as her own, even his dog. He couldn't even take his fucking dog.

Nathan had stumbled back to his car, and managed to drive to the nearest city. He trudged to the nearest bar, and spent a good fifty bucks on cheap liquor.

Nathan woke up later in a jail, covered in blood. He was laying on a lumpy mattress, and when he tried to move, he threw up. His head pounded in his hung over state. A police officer handed him some pills for his head ache, and they helped. The officer also explained to him that he had gotten into a bar fight. No one was sure how the fight started, but Nathan had broken a man's nose, and cut another man across the chest with a broken beer bottle.

He found himself in court a few days later, and was acquitted of his charges because evidence proved that he had acted in self defense. Three other men were charged with assault.

Cpl. Nathan Little peered through the scope of the sniper rifle. It was powerful enough to plow through the armor of a scorpion tank, but he was using it against a man. A man who was spreading lies about the UNSC, and was also a known terrorist. He had bombed a few battle cruisers, and some UNSC buildings. His name was Graham Novikov.

He was giving a speech right now in St. Augustine, a city on Reach. Nathan had been assigned to take him out. A few squads of marines were ready to take out the terrorists that followed him.

As Nathan placed the sight over Novikov's left eye he wondered what his girlfriend Shelly would think of this. She thought that he was training. No matter, she wouldn't find out about this.

Nathan placed his finger on the trigger of the sniper rifle. Then squeezed. The boom of the rifle almost deafened him, and the gun jumped against his shoulder. He saw the glass of the building Novikov was in, explode when the bullet passed through it.

Nathan quickly put his eye against the scope to see if he had gotten his target. Novikov's head had exploded like melon, spraying blood everywhere. People were screaming, and running away. Novikov's body still stood in place, a chunk of his skull splattered across the wall behind him, as well as gray chunks of his brain matter.

Only his bottom jaw was left in place, then his body fell forward, and blood pooled across the ground.

Nathan clamped a hand across his mouth, as bile pushed up his throat. He ripped his face away from the scope, he had never seen anything like what he had just done. Nathan leaned out the open window of the office building he was in and threw up.

Across the street, marines rushed into the building, their assault rifles gunning down terrorists who were trying to escape now that their leader was blown away.

"_Cpl. Little, good job, get to the extraction point_. _You can go home,_" his Sgt. said over the radio.

The rioters threw a beer bottle at the marines. They stormed through the city they had nearly destroyed in their rage. It was a rebellion against the UNSC. They wanted nothing but blood.

Pvt. Nathan Little held his assault rifle across his chest. He knew what was coming, but he didn't want to do it, though he knew he would anyway. He stared at the civilians turned murderous criminals before him.

"Ready your weapons," the Sgt. roared above the cries of the rebels. Nathan swallowed the bile that threatened to burst forth from his throat. He brought his assault rifle to his shoulder, and aimed it towards the approaching rioters.

"Aim your weapons," the Sgt. commanded. Nathan closed his eyes and said a quick prayer for the lives he was about to take. He settled his finger against the trigger.

"They won't fire," one of the rebels shouted, and the mob continued to advance.

'No you fools, get out of here while you still can' Nathan thought, opening his eyes. Deep in his heart he knew that these people would probably kill him if they got the chance, but he was still doubtful on shooting civilians.

"Fire," the Sgt ordered, and the rioters stopped, realizing they were wrong.

The marines all squeezed their triggers at once. The assault rifles of the twenty marines jumped to life, and the bullets sped across the distance between the marines and the mob. The bullets tore through the people, and their blood sprayed in a crimson mist behind them.

Dozens fell at a time, their chests dotted with dark red holes that oozed blood. People fell to their knees, and caught bullets in the face. Nathan saw the backs of their skulls explode in a gory shower of brains, bone and blood.

'No, you should have run' Nathan thought as his magazine ran on empty.

"Run you maggots, run," the drill Sgt. yelled, his booming voice drowning out the pounding footsteps as the marine recruits ran around the track. Nathan Little could feel sweat running down his chest. His damp shirt clung to his skin.

Once they were done running they had to climb a wall using the mesh attached to it, then jump down the other side. There was more running, then a muddy pit which they had to cross using metal bars above it.

Nathan ground his teeth together as he made his way across. The pain in his arms was growing with each bar, but he tried his best to ignore it. He made it to the other side, and had to climb a steep

ramp with a single rope for the marines to go up one at a time.

Once up there was a hanging rope to swing across to another platform. Below was thick mud that men had drowned in before. Nathan grabbed the rope, and swung across, landing on the platform.

A cable ran from the platform to the ground. He wrapped his callused hands around the cable, and stepped off the platform. He slid along the cable to land on the grass below. His chest heaved with exertion, but he couldn't stop now. He continued to run to the next obstacle.

He had to climb over a barbwire fence, then crawl across a field while machine guns fired over his head. He had heard of a few men who had stupidly put their head up, and had their life snuffed out by the large caliber bullets.

Nathan had no such problem as he crawled through the churned dirt. When he reached the end and stood up, he saw the drill Sgt. standing in front of him.

"Head to the mess hall for some food lad," he said with a smile and patted Nathan on the shoulder.

Later that night, Nathan walked into the mess hall for dinner and found that they were serving something special for the recruits today. Spaghetti.

Nathan smiled as he picked up his plate full of pasta, and sat with his buddies. They all ate in silence, enjoying this rare treat. About fifteen minutes into the delicious meal, after everyone had had a good helping, the drill Sgt. walked in.

"Okay everyone, time to go for a run," he said, with his twisted little smile.

The recruits stared at him, but quickly found themselves running down the road from the training camp to Mt. Jacob. As they were running, marines often had to stop and throw up. By the end of the run everyone had hurled at least three times.

"Don't you all love the marines," the drill Sgt. yelled out. The reply he received was less than enthusiastic.

5. Stranded Chapter 4

Author's Note: Sorry for not updating sooner, but school caught up with me. Anyway, here's Chapter 4, I know its short, but I hope you enjoy.

Chapter 4: The Swamps

The shadows lifted from his mind, and he could feel something touching his neck. Nathan groaned, but managed to open his eyes. Amy stood above him, checking his pulse.

"Welcome back sarge," she said without a smile.

"What happened," Nathan asked, putting a hand to his pounding head,

and sitting up.

"Something shot the pelican down. The pilot and co-pilot are dead. So is Gary," Amy reported.

Nathan pulled his hand away from his forehead and looked at it. There was a fair amount of blood on it, he must have cut his head pretty good. He groaned again, and got up from the metal floor. He looked over his shoulder into the cockpit.

He could see the pilot, his helmet had been shaken loose when the rockets hit, and it had rolled out of the cockpit. When they crashed, the pilot's head had been smashed open on his own controls. The co-pilot had been thrown through the cockpit window because his harness had malfunctioned. His crumpled body lay smashed against a tree, his face cut open by the shattered window.

Nathan didn't even blink. He turned back around, and walked out of the destroyed dropship. He saw Gary's corpse, a piece of metal had cut his jugular vein when they crashed. Blood stained the gray metal walls of the pelican.

Nathan shook his head. More people have died under his command. He should be used to it by now, but he wasn't. He knew more people would die because of him, but he would never get used to it. The war hadn't taken his soul just yet.

When he stepped out of the pelican, his foot sank a little in the mud that covered the ground. He looked down. Everything was wet, there were clumps of moss like grass all around the marines, and the trees were old, gnarled, and massive. A mist filled the air around them, and insects floated lazily about.

It was a swamp, and there could be battalions of Covenant hidden within its misty depths. Nathan bit his lower lip in frustration.

"How are the communications?" he asked the survivors.

"Smashed to hell," Sara said.

"Danny is pretty bad, he was knocked out in the crash, and as far as I can tell he's got internal bleeding," Amy said kneeling beside the wounded marine, who had been propped against a tree. The contents of a Medical Kit lay scattered around her as she worked.

"How about weapons? What do we have left?" Nathan asked.

"Enough battle rifles to go around, Amy still has her shotgun, we all have pistols, and Mike has his SMG. We have grenades still, and Hank's sniper rifle is still intact. Basically, we have all the weapons we can carry. The ammunition storage in the pelican has been untouched, and we should all be able to carry enough ammo to last us through the swamp," Sara answered.

"Sir, we may have weapons, but we have almost no food, and no water. We can't last very long out here on our own. We need to get out of here," Mike said.

"Okay, which way to the Library?" Nathan queried.

Mike pointed. The marines followed the direction of his finger, but it only led into the misty shadows of the swamp. Wesley gulped audibly, Sara cracked her neck again, and the others just stared.

"Okay pack up, Jim, help Amy with Danny, Mike take point, lets move out," Nathan commanded.

The marines immediately burst into action. Amy hurriedly repacked the medical kit, as Jim lifted Danny from the ground. Sara spit on the ground, and reloaded her weapon. Hank applied camouflage paint to his face, and handed some to Mike. Wesley though, was buried in his own thoughts. He knew something about the swamp that the others didn't, and he wasn't going to tell them. Better that they all died.

* * *

>There was an unsettling silence about the swamps as the marines trudged through the thick trees, waist deep water, and muck. In front Mike walked in a crouch, his battle rifle probing the air before him. His face was covered in green and brown camouflage, so none of his skin showed. His eyes were always darting back and forth, scanning the trees, and the areas beyond them.<p><p>

A bad feeling lingered in the back of Nathan's mind, but he couldn't pin point what it meant. The rest of the marines felt it as well, and Wesley was chewing on his lower lip, his hand twitching in agitation. Nathan also noticed it never went far from his pistol.

The sneaky little rat bastard knew something, something that could very well mean life or death for his marines.

Sara held a small motion sensor at her side. Nathan wised that the marine helmets had motion sensors built in, like the Spartans, but that was why ONI had spent millions worth of funding on them, and pretty much ignored the marines. Sara never took her eyes from the motion sensor. So when she suddenly looked up and gestured to Nathan, the sergeant quickly ran up to her.

"What is it?" he asked.

She pointed to the motion sensor, and Nathan saw several red dots closing in around them. He frowned, and called for a halt. The marines stopped in their tracks, and stayed completely still, scanning the swamp, their eyes and weapons never resting in one place for very long. Amy and Jim set the unconscious Danny down carefully in a moss bed, Mike backed towards the group, Hank laid himself down on the ground, and used his sniper scope to gaze into the darkness of the forest. Wesley couldn't stand still though, he constantly shifted his weight from one foot to the next.

Nathan looked through the woods with a frown. He lightly bit his lower lip before looking back at the motion sensor. There wasn't supposed to be any covenant out here, so what the hell was making the movement out there.

An inhuman growl echoed through the trees, and Nathan saw a misshapen form leap between the tress further back in the forest. Then another. Then another.

"What the fuck was that?" Jim yelled out.

"Run, get out of here," Nathan said, and as a squad, the marines broke into a run, trying to get away from whatever was in the forest. Jim and Denise struggled to keep up with the squad, as they carried Danny between them, so everyone had to slow down a bit, but with a look of pure terror Wesley broke into a run.

"Fuck, Mike go get him," Nathan ordered. The marine nodded, and started running faster to catch up with the chicken shit ONI agent.

Another growl reached the marines' ears. They looked up and saw something jump from one tree to the next. Sara raised her battle rifle and fired a burst at the creature. Globs of dark yellow blood fell to the ground where it splattered on the ground.

"What the fuck?" Sara said when she saw it, she looked around, but didn't see a corpse.

"How did it survive?" Amy called out.

More figures jumped across the path before the frightened marines, and when Nathan looked behind them, he saw more.

"Marines, hold your ground. Lets show these things how the UNSC marine corps treats its uninvited guests," Nathan said.

Jim and Amy dropped Danny and pulled their weapons off their shoulders. The group was in a circle, around the unconscious and wounded marine. Hank put his rifle away and had a battle rifle in hand, Amy checked to make sure her shotgun was loaded, Sara glanced at her motion sensor.

"Lots of movement, all around" she said.

Then something jumped into the middle of the group.

6. Stranded Chapter 5

Author's Note: Ha, quick update. Wrote it all in just two sittings, which were on one night. Anyway, the shit has really hit the fan, and so I hope you all enjoy.

Chapter 5: A New Enemy

Nathan heard something land on the ground with a wet yet solid thump behind him. He instinctively ducked, just as a misshapen claw swiped through the air where his head had been just a second before.

The other marines ducked out of the way, rolling across the ground, but Nathan, still in a crouch, brought the butt of his rifle back into the creature's gut. It stumbled backwards, and quickly recovered. It was about to attack again when all the marines opened fire at once. Every single shot hit the target, and it tore chunks of flesh from the creature, spraying its slimy yellowish blood across Nathan's back.

It collapsed, dead. Nathan looked at it. It looked similar to an elite, but its skin was discolored, a dark yellowish brown, with spots that almost looked green. Tentacles sprouted from its hands and head, and there were strange growths across its body.

Just as Nathan was about to comment, another twisted elite jumped from the trees above. It still wore the blue armor from when it had been just another covenant warrior. Nathan trained his rifle on its contorted face, and squeezed the trigger. All three shots hit, but the elite's shields simply flared. Nathan's eyes went wide.

"Kill it," he yelled, just as it jumped into the air. The creature sailed across the distance between them, and was about to crash upon Nathan when Amy stepped in front of him, and fired her shotgun.

The creature caught the full blast, which not only halted its deadly assault and shorted out the shields, but threw it back a few paces, where it landed with a splash in a puddle of murky water. Its chest had been torn apart, snapping the spine and ripping the organs within to shreds.

More of the strange elite creatures emerged from the surrounding woods. Their feral growls grew louder now that their prey was in sight. Nathan raised his rifle, and began to fire. The other marines followed his example.

Jim primed a grenade and threw it into a group of the creatures. When it exploded chunks of flesh flew across the muddy ground. Amy used to shotgun, and the results were amazing. The weapon tore through the monsters with ease, making Nathan wish that he had one.

As the marine fought however, strange bulbous things, carried by small tentacles underneath them scurried from the forest. They approached the marines. Nathan didn't know what they were, but he had no intention of finding out. He fired at one group. When one exploded, the others near it popped as well.

He was about to shoot another group when another elite came at him from behind. He ducked, and the thing went right past him. Nathan grabbed the barrel of his rifle, spun, and smashed the creature across the back of its head with all his strength.

It stumbled, and Nathan hit it again, then again, until its shields flared out. It fell to the ground, and Nathan put one boot on its neck, and fired into its head, which exploded in a gory shower of rotten brains.

Then it jumped up, throwing Nathan backwards a few feet. He landed on his back, and the air was blasted from his lungs. The creature growled, and ran at him, its claw raised. Nathan rolled out of the way as the organic weapon descended, splashing into the mud. Nathan got to his feet and shouldered the thing in the chest, causing it to fall backwards. He fired into its chest, and the flesh was torn open, exposing one of the bulbous popping creatures attached to the elite's spine. Nathan blinked, that's how it lived after having its brains blown out, it was controlled through the spinal column by those creatures. The elite was about to jump up, when Nathan shot the controller, and the elite fell back, dead.

"Aim for the chests," Nathan called out.

He turned back to see that his marines were handling the creatures fairly well. Then he noticed one of the controllers on Sara's back. Nathan immediately brought his rifle to his shoulder and fired a single burst, popping the creature.

"Don't let the little balloon things get on you," Nathan advised.

He turned back to check on Danny, only to see the marine get up, his skin color changed to the brown of the monsters, his head shoved violently to the side to make room for the controller's tentacles. One of his arms was broken, moved aside for a tentacle.

"Mother fucker," Nathan cried out.

Hank looked over to see the wounded marine had become one of the enemies. He raised his own rifle, and fired a few bursts at Danny's chest. Since Danny didn't have shields he was easier to kill. The ex-marine fell backwards, his body now torn apart both by the creatures and bullets.

Another elite came out of the forest, and began to fire a plasma rifle. Blue bolts shot towards Jim, who swore, and jumped out of the way. One bolt missed Sara's head by less than an inch, and it blackened her helmet. The elite fired at Jim who submerged himself in a puddle. The bolts sizzled on the water's surface, and Jim was unharmed.

Amy ran up beside the thing, and aimed her shotgun at the elite's chest. She fired, and the gun clicked empty.

"Fuck," she yelled, reaching into a pocket for a spare shell. But the elite didn't want to give her a chance. It turned towards her. A burst from Nathan's and Hank's battle rifles caused it to look at them and fire a few bolts, before turning back to Amy, just as she slipped a single shell into the shotgun.

She was pumping it as the creature charged forward. Her finger slipped into the trigger guard as the creature's tentacle reached for her face. She squeezed the trigger, and the blast echoed through the small clearing. The elite was thrown back, dead.

Nathan looked around, there were no more elites. He saw a one of the balloon things, and watched it climb in Danny's destroyed chest. It's tentacles wrapped around his spine, and suddenly the body jerked to life again. With a roar Danny got his feet.

"Just die," Sara yelled out, and fired at the controller in Danny's chest. It popped, and Danny again fell dead.

The swamp was again bathed in silence. The marines stood stock still, not moving, but still scanning through the trees with nervous eyes. There had to be more of those things out there.

Then just in front of them, a rustling came from the foliage. Everyone in the squad trained their weapons on the bushes. They calmed down though when Mike walked through, SMG in hand, and with Wesley just in front of him.

The two looked around the small battlefield with looks of shock. Mike

blinked when he saw Danny's corpse, mutilated and disfigured, but he quickly collected himself, again putting his cold mask on. Wesley though could not mask his surprise.

"You killed them all?" Wesley said.

"Yeah, that's what we're paid for," Jim said, but Nathan narrowed his eyes in suspicion. There was something about the way that Wesley said those words that didn't sit right with him.

"But, how? This is the perfect form of a killing machine," Wesley said.

Sara dropped her battle rifle, pulled her pistol from it's holster, took a full three steps up to Wesley, grabbed him by the front of his uniform, and shoved him against a tree, then shoved her sidearm up under his chin. The other marines didn't do anything to stop her.

"I told you not to fuck with me," she said, pushing the weapon harder against his skin. Wesley's face was locked in a grimace, his eyes shut tight. Nathan put a hand on Sara's shoulder, and she eased up on the pressure of her weapon. Wesley opened his eyes, then he arrogant smirk came back into place.

"You can't do anything to me, or you'll be considered a traitor to the UNSC," Wesley said, with a small laugh.

Sara punched him in the face. Wesley let out a whelp, bringing his hands to cup his nose. He fell to the ground, but Sara grabbed him again, wrenched him to his feet, and held the gun under his chin again. Wesley looked at her in shock, blood running freely from his nose.

"I guess ass fucks like you do bleed like the rest of us. Good, makes it easier to blow you're asses away," Sara said.

"Youâ€| you'll be hanged for this," Wesley said.

Sara spat on the ground. Wesley looked at the other marines for help, but no matter who he turned to, he could see nothing but a smoldering hatred.

"What are these things you sneaky little prick," Sara said, tapping his throat with her pistol to remind him it was there still.

"I can't tell you, that's classified information," Wesley said.

"Who gives a flying fuck. You're going to tell me, or you'll join them in hell. Do I make myself clear," Sara said, pressing her weapon harder against his flesh again.

Wesley swallowed, and wiped some of the blood from his face. He looked around the group again, but still none of them was going to come to his rescue.

"They're called the Flood. It's an infectious parasite that Spartan 117 discovered on the original Halo. They can take over their victim's bodies, using them as their soldiers. They have a rudimentary intelligence. They can use weapons, drive vehicles, but they also very strong, able to rip a man apart with its hands. No one

is sure what drives them, but they are the reason that I came down here, to study them first hand," Wesley explained.

Sara let out a laugh of disbelief at the man's stupidity, and arrogance.

"You son of a bitch," she said, then she punched him in the gut. Wesley grunted, and doubled over, then he threw up. Sara grabbed the piece of his uniform just at the scruff of his neck and threw him into the muddy ground.

"Can you believe this asshole," Sara said.

A growl from a Flood warrior echoed through the swamp. The marines immediately went on the alert. As they were looking for the flood, they didn't notice Wesley get to his feet, and draw his own pistol. He aimed it at the back of Sara's neck, the area where her helmet didn't cover. He fired a single shot, which flew straight and true.

Sara's throat exploded in a shower of arterial spray. Wesley immediately ran into the forest. Amy was at Sara's side in an instant, a med kit open, trying to stop the horrendous bleeding with biofoam, but it was useless. Sara was dead in just a few seconds.

"I'll kill you, you mother fucker," Amy called after Wesley.

Mike was about to run after him again, but Nathan grabbed him by the arm, and pointed at the motion sensor on Sara's hip. The surviving marines looked at it and saw the mass of red dots approaching them.

"We have to get out of here," Jim said.

"Lets go marines, grab Sara's ammo, and motion sensor, then we go, as fast as we can," Nathan commanded. He didn't like to loot marine corpses, especially those under his command, and he really didn't like leaving a corpse behind, but he had no choice.

"Drop a grenade by her body, we don't want the flood to use her," Nathan commanded when the corpse had been looted, remembering Danny.

Jim nodded grimly, all his jokes long gone. Hank primed a grenade, and dropped it beside Sara. Then the five marines ran into the forest of the swamps. Behind them there was a dull explosion, softened by the mass of trees, shrubs and vines, but they could all see in their mind's eye Sara's body torn apart by the explosion, but they kept running.

7. Stranded Chapter 6

Author's Note: Once more unto the breach. Chapter 6 is up for your reading pleasure, I hope you all enjoy it. Cause if you don't, why the hell am I writing this?

Chapter 6: Gun Run

Nathan hoped to catch up with Wesley and tear the traitorous fucker apart with his own hands, but for the moment, his main concern was getting his surviving marines to safety.

Flood warriors were already abound in the trees above them. Hank took quick aim with his battle rifle, and fired a single burst. The bullets tore the arm off of one of the infected elites. It spun on the branch it was running across, and fell off. It slammed into a branch below, crushing it's chest cavity and killing the controller within. The creature fell the remaining distance to the ground, where it laid still.

The marines ignored the spectacle however, and continued to run, ducking low branches, and scratching their faces on twigs sticking out from the trees and shrubs all around them. A flood warrior leapt down in front of them, and Amy shot it with her shotgun, not even stopping to ensure that it was dead. Jim stomped on his chest when he passed it though, just to fulfill his frustration at the misshapen freak.

Another elite ran from within the trees, Mike empties a clip from his SMG into its chest. The bullets tore chunks and flesh, and sprayed the tree's bark with the monster's yellowish blood.

Another warrior leapt from tree to tree, but Nathan shot it with his rifle. Its shields flared, but its trajectory had been thrown off, and it smashed into a tree trunk. It fell to the ground below, destroying its legs. Amy shot it in the chest to put it down for good, then followed the group.

Hank was starting to pant. Since he was a sniper he wasn't used to so much prolonged running, and it was catching up with him. Nathan grimly wondered whether it would be better to leave the man behind to save the rest of the squad. Nathan never liked to sacrifice those under his command, but sometimes it had to be done for the greater good. He knew he would command his troops to leave him behind if the situation called for it, and without hesitation, but he couldn't bring himself to play with other people's lives.

Then a creature emerged from the foliage ahead of them that shook Nathan from his thoughts. It was bloated, like a giant gas sack. It waddled towards them slowly on short stubby legs, and two short twisted arm hung uselessly from its side. There was a small lump of flesh on the front of its sac which may have been its head, but Nathan didn't care, as long as it could die.

Four combat forms came up behind it, and Nathan was about to aim at them when an idea came to his head. He aimed at the bulbous sack, and fired a burst, remembering how the infectious controllers had popped, and destroyed other controllers around it.

The three bullets punctured the thin layer of flesh that made up the sack. Though Nathan expected a larger pop than before, he did not expect the violent explosion that ensued. The four warriors were thrown away, two smashing against trees, a third crashing into a bush, and the fourth flew backwards into a deep puddle. Nathan himself was thrown back, and he hit his head on a rock. He felt liquid from the sack splash on him, and heard someone yell something about a 'carrier' possibly Mike.

The other marines had stopped and were again fighting a vicious battle against the flood as Nathan collected himself. His vision swam, all he could see were blurs, all blending together. It was a few seconds before he could make out shapes again, and the first thing he saw was a controller propelling itself towards him.

"Shit," Nathan muttered, feeling around for his rifle, more out of instinct than thought. His fingers could only feel the soft cool mud of the ground, he couldn't find his gun. After what seemed like years to Nathan he felt something solid in his palm. He grabbed it.

It wasn't his gun, it was a rock, but beggars can't be choosers. Nathan threw the rock at the controller that was getting too close for comfort. The rock sailed directly over it.

"Fuck," Nathan said, his head clear now. He immediately reached out for his gun again, and again he couldn't find it. The controller leapt at Nathan, though he couldn't figure out how it would be able to do that. He rolled out of its way, and it landed where he had been just a precious few seconds before. The controller skittered a few paces past its landing spot, then it turned back to advance on Nathan.

The Sgt. frantically searched for a weapon. Finally his hand came into contact with something solid. Though it wasn't his gun, it had the rough texture of bark. As the controller leapt again, Nathan swung with all his might. The stick he held in his hand sliced through the air like a knife and smashed violently with the controller.

It popped on contact with the wood, but as Nathan followed through, bits of flesh still clung to his makeshift weapon.

Nathan struggled to catch his breath, remembering how those things had crawled inside of Danny and curled their tentacles around his spine, and throughout his body.

Nathan shook the images from his mind. He managed to get to his knees. He looked around, and saw his gun laying in puddle a few feet away. He walked over to it, trying not to draw attention to himself. His muscles screamed for rest, but Nathan couldn't do that yet, there was still a battle being fought.

He knelt down, and picked his BR55 rifle. The cool metal felt good in his gloved hands. Though the dark gray metal was covered in splotched of mud, it was still in good working order.

Nathan turned, and fired two burst into the back of the first Flood warrior he saw. This one had shields, which flared bright blue when the projectiles hit it. The monster turned, and let out a growl. It charged Nathan, who fired another three bursts. On the second its shields flared out, and the third burst went through flesh. Nathan fired again, but his rifle clicked empty.

"Oh shit," he said urgently as the elite charged at him, flailing its arms. Nathan took a chance and turned his rifle so he held the butt towards the creature. He charged forward. Against a normal enemy this would have confused it, which Nathan had been hoping to do. But the Flood don't care about themselves. It didn't even flinch when Nathan yelled out his challenge.

Nathan ducked his head under the first swing, and dodged the second, then drove the butt of his rifle into the thing's chest. The bullets from Nathan's shooting had damaged the ribs, and so when Nathan hit it, the ribs collapsed, and the rifle butt crushed the controller.

Breathing frantically Nathan looked at the corpse at his feet, then he swung his gaze across the small battlefield. His marines were fighting amazingly well, but he knew this wouldn't last forever, fatigue always won in the end. Nathan's own limbs were already groaning against each movement and only the adrenaline pumping through his veins kept him on his feet.

The other marines were all great fighters at close range, especially Amy, whose shotgun was making a fair sized pile of corpses around her. Jim stayed mobile, firing his rifle into the chests of Flood warriors. Mike though wasn't still ever. His SMG spat bullets into the Flood like a hose, and he would often finish them with a well placed kick to their chests. As Nathan watched the veteran marine kicked out a Flood Warrior's knees, causing it to fall to the ground, where he then stomped on its back, snapping its spine, and severing the connection to the remainder of the body rendering the host useless.

Hank however was a sniper, and not used to fighting in such closed spaces. That was how the infected Elite had gotten behind him with the marine noticing. While he shot two warriors down the one came behind him, and grabbed him. Hank screamed, snatching Nathan's attention. The creature climbed a tree holding Hank, who was screaming a pure terror, hitting the creature's back with his fists. His rifle was laying on the ground, where it wouldn't do him any good anymore.

"Fuck, let him go you prick," Jim yelled up to the creature firing a few bursts before another warrior attacked him, hitting him with a tentacle, sending him flying five feet backwards. The Flood warrior growled and jumped through the air to crush Jim beneath it's feet, but the marine rolled out of the way. The creature landed on the ground, sending mud into the air. Jim fired his rifle directly into the things chest at a range where it was impossible to miss. Nathan shouldered his own rifle and fired a few bursts to help the marine.

The monster was killed, as were the others, nothing was left. Amy calmly reloaded her shotgun, slipping shells into the weapon while gazing up into the tops of the trees looking for Hank. Mike walked over to the battle rifle Hank had left behind, and pulled the magazine out, and promptly tossed it to Nathan. The Sgt. caught the magazine, and pocketed it. Then they heard Hank's screams.

"NNNOOO! OH GOD NNNNOOO! SOMEBODY HEL-", he was saying before being violently cut off. Blood began to fall from the trees above, splattering across the muddy ground. Then an arm fell, then a leg. The surviving marines watched in disgust as limb after limb fell from the tree tops. Especially when the torso, which had been ripped apart exposing the shining bone of his ribs, fell to the ground followed by the head.

"Jesus fucking Christ," Jim said, his voice sagging with disgust.

Mike shook his head, then stepped forward and began fishing through the dissected corpse's pockets. Jim stepped forward.

"What the hell do you think you're doing. Don't desecrate his body just leave it alone," the distressed marine said. Nathan watched the private, he was reaching the edges of his endurance. Physically he was fine, but mentallyâ€|

"We need the ammo, and the rations that he carried. We don't have enough supplies to just leave him here," Mike said, pulling a few battle rifle magazines and a candy bar from the late sniper's pockets.

"No, he's gone through enough, leave him alone. Leave him alone!" Jim screamed reaching for Mike's throat.

"Jim, settle the fuck down. This isn't Earth, we don't have the equipment to be fucking around here," Nathan snapped, and Jim immediately calmed down, his Sgt.'s voice bringing him back to reality. Jim looked apologetically at Mike, then backed away, leaving Mike to loot the remains of Hank's body. Nathan looked into the trees hoping to see the Flood that did this to one of his men.

"Strange," Amy muttered. Nathan looked over towards her, seeing the puzzled look on her face.

"What's Strange," he asked, curiosity overtaking him. That and the fact he needed to know what his marines were thinking.

"I was under the impression that the flood took people to become potential hosts. I wonder why they just killed Hank outright instead of infecting him," Amy responded, glancing up into the trees then over to her Sgt.

Nathan though about it, pondering the statement, and all that he had seen over the past hour, and decided that it would be best not to think about it at the moment.

"Don't dwell on it, let's just get out of here. We should set up camp somewhere. We all need the rest," he commanded.

The other marines nodded, grateful that they would be able to rest soon. They continued their march, leaving the mass of torn flesh that was once Corporal Hank Thompson behind.

Walking at point, Nathan couldn't help but feel guilty about the thoughts he had about leaving Hank behind. The man had been more than a soldier, he had been a friend, he had a wife, two children. He looked at the rest of the squad. He couldn't make any promises, but he would do his damnedest to make sure that they got out of these god forsaken swamps alive.

* * *

>In the trees above, a single misshapen elite covered in fresh blood followed the group. It gripped a plasma rifle in its right hand, it left was a brutal claw that it had used to tear Hank apart. On its back thick green tentacles waved around, helping to move it along in the tree tops.<p><p>

"Be ready to die foolish humans, my time to listen is over," it said in a deep grating voice.

* * *

>Wesley stumbled through the jungles, tears running from his eyes. Why had he shot that bitch. He knew she deserved to die, they all deserved to die. His superior had said so. But now he had acted too soon, and he was alone in the swamps, being hunted by the flood. Why had he been so stupid. Then Wesley stumbled into a clearing with an ancient concrete building in it. At the entrance two normal elites stood guard.<p><p>

"Oh thank god," Wesley said, stumbling towards the aliens.

The elite looked at each other. Then one shook its head and said something to its comrade in the elite tongue. Then it raised its carbine, and aimed it between Wesley's eyes.

8. Stranded Chapter 7

Author's Note: Wrote this up really quick, in about 2 hours, maybe less. Anyway, this chapter is a little weird, but I hope you enjoy :)

Chapter 7: Guilt

The Marines found a hill, with a flat edged cliff facing the north. A few boulders were scattered around, and a fallen tree led from the foot of the hill to the top. The marines clambered to the top, panting in exhaustion due to their forced march through the wooded swamp. Once they reached the camp, Jim immediately fell to the ground.

"We need to set some watches. Switch every hour. We rest for four hours in total" Nathan said, looking up into the trees every so often.

"I'll take first watch sir," Mike said, and Nathan nodded.

"Amy goes second, then Jim can go. I'll take last watch," Nathan said. Amy and Mike immediately agreed.

Amy went and found a bed of moss growing across the ground and up a rock, and she leaned against it, and fell asleep in a few seconds, shotgun still clutched tightly in her hands. Nathan saw that Jim had winked out right where he had dropped himself. Nathan decided to rest against the single tree on the top of the hill. It conveniently had a small notch in the trunk big enough for a person to lean into and be semi comfortable.

With all the worries running through his mind Nathan didn't think he would be able to fall into sleep despite his fatigue. Then he fell into a deep sleep.

* * *

>"Catch," Kevin, Nathan's little boy called, tossing a baseball to his father, who caught it easily. The ten year old boy laughed, as

Nathan threw it back. Kevin caught it in his glove, and threw it back. <p>But before Nathan could catch it, Jasper, his Golden Retriever jumped up and snatched the ball, landed on all four paws, then ran off.<p>

"Jasper, get back here," Kevin cried out, and broke into a run after the dog, who ran as fast as he could towards the woods that filled the rest of Nathan's property. Shelly came out from her reading on the back deck to watch Kevin chase Jasper around the backyard.

"Isn't he wonderful," she said, leaning on his shoulder. Nathan let out a small laugh, then leaned in to kiss his wife. She responded, wrapping her arms around him, then they heard a ringing from the porch.

"Oh shit," she said, running to answer the phone. She had been expecting a call from her employer on the changing of her work hours to make more room for family.

When she picked the remote phone up, Nathan saw her mouth form the word 'Hello'. The person on the other end said something that horrified her. Her face turned pale, and the phone fell from her fingers, and clattered on the deck. She fell onto her chair and buried her face in her hands, and Nathan saw her body shake with sobs.

"Momma," Kevin called from behind Nathan, but when Nathan turned, it wasn't his son who stood there. It was Pvt. Jason Carlson. His face burnt away by plasma bolts, and his charred intestines falling from his burst stomach. He screamed and reached for his Sgt. with blackened fingers.

Nathan took a few steps backwards, and tripped over the corpse of Pvt. Jennifer Novikov, her arm blown off by a needler, then she bled to death. Nathan looked around, it wasn't his home anymore, it was Old Mombassa. He saw a destroyed warthog, the flaming skeleton of a man who could never be identified sat behind the wheel.

He was covered in blood, both human and alien. Corpses were everywhere, some burnt to a crisp by plasma, others with large holes blown out of them by projectiles. Blood flowed through the streets of the old African town like a river.

"Help me sarge, I'm dying," Jason moaned, still reaching for his lieutenant.

"Stay away from me, you're dead," Nathan cried out, pushing the specter of his marine back, causing the strapless helmet to fall off, and taking a slough of flesh with it, and the plasma weakened skull opened, allowing the marine's brains to fall out.

Nathan stared in terror, when an arm grabbed his calf. The Sgt. looked down and saw Jennifer looking up at him, blood flowing from her mouth.

"Help sarge," she moaned, using her only hand to claw up his leg. Nathan pushed it away, and started to run.

"IT BURNS," the skeleton in the warthog cried out in pain.

"Shut up, shut up, it wasn't my fault. Leave me alone god damnit. I can't help you, you're dead," Nathan yelled out, tears streaming, though whether from smoke or pain he didn't know, he just kept running.

More corpses saw him, they came towards him, their arms outstretched. Blood oozed from many wounds on each of them. Burnt patches of skin peeled away, revealing charred bone beneath. They all called out for him, their moans laden with pain and suffering.

Nathan stood in the middle of the street, panting. He turned, and ran into Wesley, pointing a gun at his unprotected neck.

"I always thought platoons were made up of a fair amount of marines, this is about squad size. So where is everyone else?" he asked, his false, arrogant smile pasted on his face, but his eyes were slanted evilly.

Then he pointed at the corpse of Pvt. Sara Dedrick with the toe of his boot. The front of her throat had a hole through it, and blood gushed from the open wound.

"Why didn't you watch the asshole, you knew he couldn't be trusted," Sara said accusingly, even though it was impossible for her to be able to talk at all.

"Leave me alone," Nathan yelled out, pulling his helmet off, and placing his hands over his ears. He ran through the battle torn hell hole that was once a peaceful town.

Then he saw Pvt. Gary Potter, his skull smashed open like a melon, but he had a twisted smile on his face. He stared at Nathan with his one eye, the other having been knocked out when the pelican crashed. The two pilots sat beside him, their limbs bent in impossible angles, blood flowing from their mouths. The three stared at him, accusing him.

Nathan ran past them, he saw Danny mutilated by the Flood. He looked at Nathan, then growled out. But Nathan could hear words from the inhuman sounds.

"You shot me," the pitiful creature moaned.

Nathan clamped his hands tighter over his ears and kept running, and the city was gone. He was in a green field, and there were white chairs facing a makeshift altar. Nathan took a breath and straightened his suit. The chairs were filled with smiling people in suits and dresses. They were all looking up at the man before him. Hank Thompson stood on the altar, a big, bright smile on his face.

The music started playing, and everyone looked down the grassy aisle between the chairs. Alison Carter, Hanks bride walked, her arm locked with her father's. Her white smile brightened the hearts of everyone present.

Nathan couldn't help but smile, but it faded when he looked back to Hank, who was very pale. Then his friend, and the groom of Alison Carter fell apart. Nathan looked up, and saw a Covenant cruiser

blocking out the sky. It was going to glass the planet. Nathan tried to get the guests out of the make shift church, but they all just stared at him. Alison ran up to him, a hate filled sneer across her face.

"You wanted him to die, you were going to leave him behind. He's dead because of you, you killed him! You killed him!" Alison screamed at him, hitting him.

Then a thick beam of energy blasted from the Covenant cruiser. No one watched though, they just watched Alison take her vengeance on Nathan. Flames raced across the grass, consuming everything in its path. Then the fire reached the guests, and they screamed as their flesh was broiled away. Just in front of him he witnessed Alison's body burnt away, but the last thing to burn were her accusing eyes.

Then Nathan's body began to burn away. The pain was incredible. He screamed out loud, but no one was coming to save him, they were all dead. Everyone was dead. He looked down to his arms as the skin was incinerated, then muscles burnt away, until nothing was left but blackened bones.

"It is time you pay for your sins," Wesley's voice called out to him. Then Amy's, then Mike's, then Jim's. Nathan looked up with burning eyes and saw the four looking down upon him, still alive.

Then they reached downâ€¦

* * *

>Nathan started as he was shaken. <p>"Sir, its your watch," Jim said, crouching beside his Sgt. He looked into his superior's eyes. He saw something there.<p>

"Sir, is everything okay?" Jim asked, a look of concern on his face. Nathan blinked, then got to his feet.

"Yes, everything is fine. A bad dream is all. Get some rest trooper," Nathan said. He picked up his battle rifle and checked to make sure that it was loaded.

He perched himself on a rock, where he could overlook the entire hill. He saw Jim curl up in a ball where he had dropped himself to the ground earlier. Nathan was again, alone with his thoughts, but he shoved them from his mind, and only thought about how he was going to get his remaining marines out of these swamps alive. If it was possible in any way.

Nathan sat on that rock for an hour, then he roused the three other marines. They grunted as they got up from the cool ground. Though the three hours of sleep each had helped amazingly, they were still very tired. They would not be able to fight for much longer.

"Okay, here's the plan. We move out, find another defensible location, then rest for a little while longer, but we can't stay in one place for very long," Nathan said.

The marines nodded in understanding, they had no desire to fight the Flood again. But they knew it would eventually happen. It was

inevitable, but they had to post-pone the battle for as long as possible to get some rest.

The marines picked up all their belongings, and started down the hill, and through the wooded swamps, hoping the worst was behind them.

But Nathan knew better.

9. Stranded Chapter 8

Author's Note: This chapter is a little shorter than usual, and the writing is a little vague in spots, but I didn't want to get too bogged down with men walking through halls so, here you go, enjoy!

Chapter 8: The Bunker

Nathan peered through the scope of his battle rifle. The sight was centered on the elite's head. It was one of two that stood on either side of a bunker entrance. He saw that they both had carbines. The Sgt. sucked on his upper teeth with his tongue in concentration, then he looked back to Mike.

"Two elites, both armed with carbines. Guarding a bunker. Could be a safe place to rest, and the covenant may be storing some weapons here," Nathan informed the Cpl. Mike nodded, and crawled forward a little bit, and used his own battle rifle to look down at the bunker entrance, his preferred SMG had been abandoned because he had run out of ammo for it. He brought the scope of his weapon to his eye.

"Yeah, but we could also get bottled up in there from the flood. If they want to get in there they have the numbers," Mike said, feeling it was his duty to point out the negative aspects of taking the bunker.

Nathan bit his lower lip, wanting to swear, but decided to keep it in. He looked around, not sure what for.

"Sir, they may have some kind of communications network we could use to call for help," Amy said from behind them, stroking the black metal of her shotgun, looking into the jungle like woods of the swamp.

"Yeah, and it would be easier to take the Flood out if they were bunched up inside. I would rather fight them inside then out, where they can jump down at us from the tops of the trees," Jim pointed out, chewing on a stick to try and keep himself calm. His nerves had been strung out tight over the past few days.

Mike thought about it for a second, then nodded with a look of appreciation on his face. Then he turned to his Sgt. who was looking through the scope of his battle rifle still.

"Lets find a bed, some guns, and some communications," Nathan said. He turned to the marines, and they nodded, making sure their guns were ready. Nathan took a deep breathe, then started down the foliage covered hill to the Bunker. Once he got to the bottom, he and the

others hid behind a log hidden by a clump of shrubs. Jim and Mike aimed their guns at the elite on the left, while Nathan aimed for the one on the right.

"Fire," Nathan said, his finger resting on the trigger.

The sounds of three battle rifles opening up ripped through the swamp. The shots hit. After four direct bursts to its chest and head, the elite on the left died, its blood across the wall behind it, it fell backwards, and slid to a sitting position, smearing its blood down the wall.

The elite on the right took two hits to its shielded head, and it was totally shocked. On the third burst its head exploded and it fell face first into the dirt, its brains leaking out across the ground.

The four marines smiled at the easy victory, but they wiped the grins away knowing that many more covenant would be waiting for them within. The marines walked in a crouch to the dead elites, they policed the weapons, two carbines and two plasma rifles. Nathan and Amy both got a carbine, and the plasma rifles went to Mike and Jim.

"Lets go and say hi, shall we," Jim said, cracking a joke, a first since they had landed in the swamp. Nathan guessed that fighting familiar enemies on semi-familiar ground gave the critical moral boost that they had all needed, especially himself.

They proceeded into the bunker, first of all there was a ramp that led into the ground, then they came to an elevator that led deeper. The marines stepped on it, wondering if the lift was automatic. Then Nathan spotted the holographic control panel. He reached his hand out, and instinctively pressed it.

There was a sudden lurch, and the elevator began to descend smoothly. The marines patiently waited, but they were alert, ready for a fight. Then the lift emerged from the ceiling of another room. An elite with a few grunts following it, were startled by the humans. The gold armor of the elite signified to Nathan that this fight would not be as easy as the original attack.

The elite let out an alien roar, and charged up an energy sword. Amy stepped forward and raised her shotgun. Jim, Nathan and Mike all fired at the grunts, who were torn up by the quick hail of bullets.

Nathan turned, and saw the elite charge Amy, who responded by firing her weapon. The boom of the shotgun was deafening, but it smashed through the shields of the elite, as well as its armor, flesh, heart, lungs, and neck. Its sword died, but the body kept moving forward. It fell to the ground just past Amy.

The other marines shook their heads at the elite, and Amy calmly slipped another shell into her shotgun.

"Don't piss with the bitch," Jim said. Amy looked up at him, and Jim realized what he had said. That was something he had always used to say to Sara after a battle. The moment was slightly awkward, could he really be replacing Sara already. He couldn't just forget about

her.

"Fuck," he muttered, then turned away from Amy.

Nathan looked around the room. There was only a single hallway that led from the room, so the marines went up it. It led to a crossroads in the hall. Both ways looked the same.

"Lets go right," Amy said.

"Why?" Mike asked, his logical thinking trying to figure out how she came up with that answer. For a reply, Amy simply shrugged.

"We'll go right," Nathan said, and started down the left passage. The others followed quickly behind.

* * *

>The creature's tentacles waved above its head as it watched the marines enter the bunker. Once they were in, the creature sent out a mental pulse and two infection forms emerged from the shadows of the swamp. They delved into the chest cavities of both corpses, and then the two elites rose to their feet, as combat forms. <p>The creature sent out another mental pulse, and dozens of combat forms emerged from the woods of the swamp. The humans rampaging through the bunker would help the Flood greatly.<p>

* * *

>"It is time to see what you have wrought," the creature said in it's deep voice. <p>Nathan thought he heard the elevator in the room behind them moving, and he suddenly wished he had at least hidden the bodies. He pushed his marines forward, always forward. They walked through corridor after corridor, until they seemed to blend together.<p>

Then suddenly ahead Nathan saw a door, the light above it was green. Possibly meaning unlocked.

"Lets go marines," Nathan said, and the other three got on either side of the door. Nathan walked in front of it, and it opened automatically. Inside were three elites, two armed with carbines, the other with a plasma rifle. There were also roughly a dozen grunts, all in the stages of eating.

The room was apparently some form of mess hall, though it hadn't been so originally. Purple tables were placed in the room for the covenant troops to eat. But despite all this, that wasn't what caught Nathan's eye.

"You," he said.

10. Stranded Chapter 9 Dedication

Author's Note: Hey fellow Halo fans. Hope all is well in you're life unlike my own. This chapter is my proper length of 5 pages on Microsoft Word so I hope you all enjoy.

Dedication: This story is now dedicated to the memory of Jeremy

Hicks, a fellow LaSalle student who passed away May 6th 2005. We'll miss you man.

Chapter 9: The War Underground

The four marines stared in shock, and Lt. Jonathan Wesley stared back at them. For a few seconds the entire room was still, then Nathan grabbed a grenade from his hip, primed it, and chucked it into the room.

"Die you traitorous mother fucker," the Sgt. yelled, and ducked behind the door as the grenade blew.

Elites jumped out of the way, but many of the grunts were torn to pieces, and one of the elites with the carbines was killed by the fragmentations. Nathan opened the door again, and walked in, shooting a grunt in the face. He looked across the room to see Wesley getting out a back door.

"Get back here you fucker," Jim yelled shooting another grunt in the head.

One elite was sneaking up behind Nathan. It raised its carbine above its head, about to smash the Sgt. in the back of the neck, killing him instantly, but Amy entered the room, and fired a single shot. The elite's body sprawled across the floor in front of Nathan.

The last elite began to fire its Plasma rifle, its red armor gleaming in the flashing light of its weapon. Jim, Amy and Nathan had to duck behind tables. The plasma began to eat through the covenant metal, until Mike fired his own plasma rifle.

Mike's bolts hit the elite across the chest, shorting its shields out, and then Nathan poked his rifle over the table, and fired a burst into its head, and it spun and fell on its side; dead. Blood began to pool around its corpse.

Nathan scanned the room, everything that wasn't human had been blown all across the walls, floors and even the ceiling, from which sticky bright blue blood hung in globs. The Sgt. looted the two elites who had carbines, and split their ammo between him and Amy.

"I can't believe that son of a bitch has betrayed his own fucking species," Jim said. Nathan looked over at him, then realized he was talking about Wesley.

"I'll kill him," Amy said, pumping her shotgun, though Nathan got the feeling she would rather use her bare hands.

"That's how the hunters knew we were there," Mike said suddenly.

"What do you mean?" Nathan asked.

"Remember how those two hunters outside the forerunner complex had attacked before it would have been possible for them to even see us?" Mike queried.

"Yeah, maybe they heard us," Jim said

"No, we made no sound," Amy said, and she looked directly at Jim.

"You were with him, did he do anything?" Amy asked him.

"No, he scratched his neck and said that you guys were in position, so I told him toâ€¦," Jim trailed off as he realized what he had witnessed just an hour ago.

"Holy shit, he must have had a radio. The son of a bitch gave our position away," Nathan said.

Then he heard an elite scream down the hall from whence they came. Then the growls of Flood combat forms followed it. The four marines looked down the hall then at each other.

"Move," Nathan commanded, and the marines sprinted for the door that Wesley had escaped through.

* * *

>Wesley was panting as he ran through the metal corridors that blending into each other. He paid no attention to the covenant soldiers who were preparing for battle against the flood which had somehow gotten into the compound. <p>But Wesley did not fear the flood, something worse was after him. Four really pissed off humans. Over the years Wesley had been feeding critical information to the covenant, because he knew that they would be the eventual victors in the war, and he didn't want to die. The remainder of his species didn't see things so clearly though.<p>

Wesley had given the covenant the location of Reach, and the specs on the orbital MAC guns, and even what little information he could gather on the Spartans. Being inside ONI helped him, no one suspected him.

The only thing he had not given the aliens was the location of Earth, and that was for reasons of personal insurance, but they had found it none the less, and Wesley had somehow found himself on the IN AMBER CLAD.

He managed to get attached to a marine squad. A group of men and women who hadn't trusted him from the beginning, and had fought their way through an entire complex of Covenant, then killed two hunters with a single shotgun shell and a grenade. He realized that maybe these soldiers, these grunts from the lowest levels of human society were brighter, more able, than the rich aristocrats who became the generals and ONI agents.

Now, the four survivors of that squad had managed to hunt Wesley down, and they were going to kill him once they found him, and it wouldn't be an easy death either, Marines tended not to like it when someone shot one of them through the throat.

So, submerged within his own thoughts, Wesley ran right into a red armored elite. He fell on his ass, and the elite looked down at him with it's equivalent of a sneer. It reached down and picked Wesley up by the front of his black ONI uniform, and held the frightened human before it.

"You're cowardice will not go rewarded in the covenant, do not get in my way again or I will personally remove you're entrails," the alien warrior snarled, and threw Wesley back to the ground, then walked away.

Wesley realized at that moment that he hadn't saved himself, he had condemned his soul to eternal hell, and he began to cry.

* * *

>The creature had walked into the bunker. His warriors were throwing themselves at a barricade constructed by two elites. The green lasers from their carbines tore into the Flood combat forms. <p>The creature sent out a mental pulse, and the infected elites stopped attacking the barricade. The creature walked forward, and the elites stared for a moment at it in terror. One of them cursed in its ancient Sangheili tongue.<p>

Then they fired. The carbine ammunition tore through the creature's flesh, but it didn't flinch, much less die. It continued forward with long strides. The elites roared, their mandibles stretching out in fury.

The creature's tentacles snapped forward, and wrapped around both the elites, and easily snapped their necks. The bodies could still be used, but the infection forms would have to reconnect the spine with the brain to regain their old memories and skills.

The creature tore the barricade down, and the Flood rushed further into the bunker. The creature turned around, and looked down the other corridor that it could take. Down that corridor were five reclaimers. It began its journey.

* * *

>Nathan put a burst through the face of a very surprised grunt, and continued his journey. An elite popped out from a alcove behind the Sgt. preparing to send some bolts of plasma from its rifle into the marine's back, but Amy wiped the notion away with a well placed shotgun blast to the head, which destroyed everything above the elite's neck. <p>Nathan didn't even look behind him to view the mess, but continued running down the corridors, knowing that the Flood were behind them, and that Wesley could very well be somewhere ahead of them, so he pushed himself. He was still tired, he hadn't got much rest, and he could feel weariness and despair creeping back into his Marine's thoughts.<p>

The Flood were after them again, though they hadn't seen them yet, they had heard them and that had been enough.

"I can't wait to catch that fucker," Jim said, and the others just nodded. A Jackal came around the corner, it's shield covering its body, but the marines were too close. Jim took out his fury by kicking the Jackal's energy shield. The alien stumbled backward, blood running from it's mouth.

Jim stood over it, brought his foot up, then down against on the birdlike aliens head with a satisfying crunch. Jim looked down at his handiwork and grinned sadistically. The alien's skull had burst open, and it's brains had spilled out onto the floor.

"Take that you shit munching bitch," Jim said, and when he looked up, and saw the other three had kept going during his spectacle.

"Hey, wait up," he called running after them.

As Nathan was running a familiar scent reached his nostrils: the heavy, damp air of the swamp. They had found the exit.

"Marines, we are out of here," Nathan said.

"What about communications?" Amy asked, almost pleading.

"Fuck it, let the flood play with the Covies while we get away," Mike said.

"Mike's right, I don't want to fight the Flood any more than we have to," Nathan said, and turned up to a ramp that led outside. When they exited, Nathan hoped he hadn't made a horrible mistake.

The four marines looked behind them, seeing that the entrance came out at the foot of a large cliff. They had gone down a long way. Then they heard a rustling in the shrubs.

The four turned at once, and they saw a flash of a black uniform. Nathan smiled, and aimed his rifle. Then a bright blue flash almost blinded him. He realized what it was after a split second.

"Plasma grenade," he called out, and dived to the side as Wesley through the alien explosive. The other dived as well, but Mike had been caught off guard. His reflexes had been stretched tight over the years to the point where he could dodge plasma bolts. But this time, his reflexes betrayed him, quicker than he knew, his leg shot out, and kicked the plasma grenade.

It stuck to the toe of his boot. He looked down in shock, then looked back up to Nathan. Mike snapped a brisk salute, just as Nathan saw the glowing blue ball.

"Mike," the Sgt. called out, and the grenade exploded.

As Alison walked up the aisle, Nathan's military trained eyes scanned the people who had gathered on this wonderful sunny day. In the front seat Mike sat in his only suit, slightly faded through the years, he sat in the second row, behind Hank's family. He had his mischievous smile stretched across his face.

It was a smile that no one had seen him use in uniform, or even in public. It was a smile that Mike only used when in the company of true friends.

Amy got off the ground, not bothering to wipe away the dirt that covered her face, and fired into the woods with her shotgun. Pellets tore through leaves and branches, and pocked the tree branches.

"I'll kill you, you mother fucker," Amy called out, as her weapon began to click on empty.

Mike got to his feet, and grabbed Amy's shotgun by the barrel and

lowered it. Amy then fell to her knees and started sobbing. Jim was still laying on the ground, staring at the charred upper body of Cpl. Mike Rogers. The lower half had been incinerated by the blast, or at least seemed that way. Blood was splattered across the ground, and stained the leaves around them.

"Jesus Christ, what is this shit? What does the bastard have to gain by betraying his own race?" Amy said, looking up at Nathan with a tear stained face.

"You might as well start asking questions like why the good ones die young and the grouchy fuckers live to such an old age, or why the Covenant are attacking us in the first place. It's a question we can't answer, and I don't want to know the answer. All I know is that we have to continued on somehow to make sure that their deaths have not been in vain, ensure that they have not died needlessly," Nathan said, putting his hand on Amy's shoulder. It was a cheesy speech, something you'd expect in a really crappy movie, but what else do to say to a person in grief, to a person who has lost people close to them. Nathan shook his head, it was all bullshit.

Jim got to his feet, he had been awakened by his Sgt.'s talk, now he had fury plastered on his face. The almost child-like innocence and humor and been completely incinerated.

"Let's kill the fucker," he said. Amy looked up at him, wiped away her tears, slipped a few shells into her shotgun got to her feet and pumped the gun in her hands.

"Agreed," she said.

The three marines took their weapons, and entered the swampy woods. They had to get out of this alive, but if they didn't, at least they would have taken out the bastard who had sold out his own species.

11. Stranded Chapter 10

Author's Note: Here we are, nearly at the end of this little saga I have going. I hope you all enjoy my dark little take on Halo.

Chapter 10: Everything

Nathan ran through the brush. Twigs swiped at his face, scratching him, but he ignored the stings. Amy was right behind him, and Jim was beside her. They were going to catch Wesley and make him pay for what he had done.

As they were running though, Nathan heard something above them. He looked up and saw a misshapen elite leap from one branch to the another. He realized the Flood had found them. Wesley would have to wait for a little bit.

Nathan stopped, and fired a shot into the trees, and a Flood warrior fell to the earth. Without thinking Amy put a round into it's back. The body convulsed with the force of the blast, and then was still.

More of the Flood jumped down from the leaves above. Mud splashed up from where they landed. For a few seconds the Flood and the marines just stared at each other.

"You mother fuckers," Jim yelled, and the swamp burst into vicious violence. Jim fired his entire magazine into the flood, then quickly chucked a grenade near a small group. When the small device blew, Flood body parts were thrown everywhere.

Amy fired shot after shot at the Flood charging her. Just like last time she was creating a pile of corpses. Whenever she ran out of ammunition and she didn't have time to reload she would simply use her shotgun like a club. She swung with a strength fueled by hatred, and vengeance. She would knock off limbs, or smash in chest cavities ending the lives of any Flood near her.

Nathan used his battle rifle, and would occasionally pull his carbine from his back to fire the alien weapon at the shielded Flood, but it quickly ran out of ammo, and he was back to using his battle rifle.

As he continually squeezed the trigger sending burst after burst of hot brass into his enemies, he noticed his ammo was quickly depleting. He wished that he had paused to find some of Mike's bullets, but he was also thankful for Mike looting Hank's corpse, or else he would be running dry right now.

Behind him Jim swore as his last magazine ran empty. The younger marine pulled out the plasma rifle he had taken and began firing it at the Flood. As the bolts began to scorch his enemy's flesh, Jim still held the trigger, as the weapon overheated. He let out a loud scream of agony.

He dropped the covenant weapon from burnt hands. Nathan spun to see. Jim's hands were black, with small cracks of dark crimson that wouldn't bleed because they had cauterized. Jim fell to his knees and began cuddling his wounded hands. A Flood warrior jumped from the trees above, and landed just behind the Pvt.

Jim looked over his shoulder with a tear streaked face. A look of resignation was plastered on his face, but that turned to fear as the Flood warrior brought it's arms back. Then thrust them forward into a devastating uppercut that lifted Jim off the ground, through the air, to smash his head against a tree, breaking his neck. He slumped into a lifeless jumble on the ground.

"Jim no," Amy called, blowing the head off of another infected Elite, then stomping down on its chest to crush the controller within. The Flood that had killed Jim turned, and let out it's utterly alien growl, and charged Amy, only to be turned into shotgun fodder just so many before it.

Nathan gritted his teeth, he took aim at another creature and fired. The gun sounded with the dry click of an empty magazine. He reached to his pouch, and pulled out his last magazine. He slammed it into his gun, and took aim again, and squeezed the trigger again.

The gun jammed. Nathan stared at it in horror, then looked up at the Flood that was falling from the peak of it's jump towards him. Nathan reversed his hold on the gun, holding it by the barrel. He swung just

as the Flood went to swipe at his head. It was knocked to the ground, and Nathan continued to smash it, until he was sure it was dead.

Nathan stood up, panting, covered in yellowish blood, and saw a beast with six tentacles coming from its back. It just emerged from the forest, walking with an eerie calmness that a human would posses. Amy had just reloaded her shotgun, and she looked up.

"What the fuck is that?" she demanded of anyone who could provide her with an answer. When none came she brought the butt of the shotgun to her shoulder, aiming at the things chest.

Until it's tentacles snapped forward, and easily tore Amy apart, like she was a doll. Nathan stared in horror. What the hell was he going to do now.

"You cannot stand before us reclaimer," it said in a low gravely voice, shocking Nathan. It stepped forward. Nathan threw his gun at it, but a tentacle hit the gun, breaking it in half. The tentacles wrapped around Nathan, lifted him into the air, and threw him into a puddle.

Nathan lifted his face from the muddy water, spitting some out. He could hear it behind him. He spun onto his back, and jumped to his feet. He charged the creature, though he didn't really intend to do anything by it. The creature simply swatted him aside.

"You are the reclaimers that we have feared. You are weak," it said.

Nathan spit blood from his mouth, and looked up at the thing approaching him. It's tentacles snapped forward and enrobed him. The creature lifted Nathan a few feet above the ground. Nathan looked down at it, and what disturbed him most was that the thing seemed not to have any eyes.

"What are you?" he asked.

"I am the avatar, we are the Flood," it said, almost like it had practiced this before. It's tentacles began to constrict, taking the air out of Nathan's lungs. He couldn't breathe, blackness was creeping in around the edges of his vision. He was going to die here, he had failed.

"You are weak, you can't hold anything" the creature said, and Nathan screamed.

* * *

>Kevin sat in the dark room, water was dripping somewhere in the back. Nathan had just brought his son's body down from where he had hung himself in this shitty apartment. He had barely seen his son since Shelly had kicked him out. Kevin had barely been a teenager, but he had hung himself in a deep depression, but Nathan had been unable to help.<p><p>

Jasper had died a while earlier, mostly because Shelly didn't give a shit about the dog, except that her keeping the golden retriever caused Nathan pain. She and her new husband later tried to sue Nathan

for emotional damages when he told her about Kevin's fate, and she had won, despite the fact that she was supposed to be watching him. Nathan was broke, and had to live in the Marine barracks.

Then he had been promoted to Sgt. and given command of Platoon 6, where he quickly made friends. Then he had been sent to planet after planet to fight the covenant. He had seen the men under his command, his friends, get torn apart but Nathan kept pushing. The war only got bloodier, until it reached the peak of bloodlust on Earth, where every single Marine in his platoon had been killed except for eight, including himself. Now, even they were lost in a war that knew no limits, and had no mercy.

* * *

>Nathan felt himself dropped to the ground, and the armor on his shins prevented him from bruising as he had landed on a rock. He looked up at the Avatar, who just hit him again. Nathan was thrown a short distance, and landed face down in the mud.<p><p>

Nathan struggled to his knees, his back to the Flood Avatar, who was slowly walking towards him. Nathan's mind reeled from the sudden flashback. He didn't feel the moisture soaking through the fatigues stretched over his knees. He didn't feel the chill that ran up his back, and through his limbs. He didn't feel the blood that ran down his chin from a split lip. He could only see his son's face.

The creature was right, he hadn't been able to hold on to anything that he had held dear. His wife, his dog, his son. It had all been taken away with the swish of a pen on paper, and the stretching of a rope.

Then the marines that had looked up to him, that had turned to him for support and help when their grief overcame them. He had cared deeply for every single member of his platoon, now they were all dead, buried in glassed soil around the galaxy. The Avatar was right.

"You are weak reclaimer, like all the others. You and your entire species will become one with the flood," the creature said.

Something snapped inside Nathan. Just in front of him, laying in the dirt, was Amy's arm, still gripping her shotgun. He remembered she had loaded it, and pumped it. Without looking behind him, Nathan reached down and picked the gun up. He got to his knees, holding the gun. The Avatar was almost right behind him.

"You will die reclaimer," it said, almost mocking him.

Nathan turned and pressed the barrel of the shotgun against the creature's head. It stopped, it's tentacles began to coil up to strike. Though it didn't have any eyes, Nathan was sure he saw surprise on what there was of the thing's face.

"Reclaim this," he said. When Nathan pulled the trigger, he wasn't a Sgt., he wasn't a marine, he wasn't a member of the UNSC. For the first time in his life, he was Nathan Little, the man.

The buckshot shell in the shotgun's chamber fired, and the pellets

tore through the avatar's head, and it exploded in a shower of yellow gore. The creature fell back, and Nathan stood over it, and fired another shell into it's chest.

Calmly he found Amy's body, and took her shotgun shells, and her grenades. He reloaded his shotgun, and dropped a grenade under the Avatar's body. Then he walked into the woodlands of the Swamp.

He was going to fulfill Amy's and Jim's last wish. He was going to avenge Mike and Sara. He was going to satisfy his own need for vengeance. He was going to remove this threat to humanity.

Most of all though, he was going to redeem his own soul.

Nathan Little was going to kill Jonathon Wesley.

12. Stranded Chapter 11 THE END

Author's Note: This is it. The finale, the end. My first story on this site is completed, I hope you have all enjoyed it, and perhaps I will return again to write more about Nathan Little. Now I will leave you to you're reading, be sure to review, reviews about the entire story, and even flames are welcome.

Chapter 11: End Game?

The writhing mass of tentacles known as the Gravemind looked down at where it had once clutched the green armored reclaimer, and the creature of flesh and faith. It had let them go, to stop the ring from being activated. It was using the very species that was supposed to wipe the flood out.

The thing had to do it, but now it realized that the reclaimers may be stronger than it had originally anticipated. The Gravemind had just lost it's connection with the Avatar. It had been killed by a reclaimer thought to be exceptionally weak. It was wrong, so where else could it be wrong.

The end game was coming soon, and the entire universe would be affected by the actions within the next few hours. Blood would be shed, and lives would be lost. And the fate of the flood, reclaimers, and covenant stood in the outcome.

* * *

>Jonathon Wesley felt warm tears running down his face. He had come so close to death. He had killed Mike, and now the marines were pursuing him again. He ran through the woods, pressing against his midsection to try and make the cramps stop hurting.<p><p>

He had also come close to the flood, who were surprisingly single minded in their pursuit of the marines, but he had actually pissed himself in fear when the first infected Elite had jumped overhead.

Suddenly Wesley emerged from the trees, and he was on the edge of a cliff. He looked over the edge and saw a river, but it was a long ways down, he wouldn't survive a fall, and he wouldn't be able to climb down.

So Wesley had no choice. He turned back towards the woods, panting heavily, and stood there, a few feet from the edge of the cliff, and awaited the justice that was coming for him. Maybe he could talk his way out of it, he still had a slim glimmer of hope, and he reached desperately for it.

* * *

>Nathan Little walked through the woodlands, his mind set on a single purpose, his heart frozen to a chunk of ice resting in his chest. Each step was deliberate, his narrowed eyes, staring ahead of him, looking for Wesley. The shotgun rested firmly in his hands, which bled from multiple cuts.<p><p>

A cut across his forehead bled freely, but he ignored the blood that rolled down his cheek replacing the tears that had threatened to flow before. Wesley signified everything that had happened to Nathan over his tormented years of life, and now he was going to get his soul back, and condemn the poor son of a bitch who got on the end of the shotgun.

It was a few minutes later when he emerged from the woodlands into the clearing set on the edge of a cliff. Wesley stood just before him, panting. Nathan raised the shotgun to his shoulder, and aimed at Wesley's face. His finger settled on the trigger.

"Wait, Nathan. Can you really kill a fellow human being? Especially in a time of war such as this, we need everyone to help fight against the covenant. What's worse is the Flood, they will consume everything if we don't band together," Wesley said.

* * *

>Novikov's head exploded as the sniper bullet struck, then Nathan gunned down the rioters that approached the marines lines. Bullets, fire, blood and death surrounded him.<p><p>

* * *

>Nathan lower his shotgun. Wesley's plan was working he couldn't believe it. He had done it, he would live.<p><p>

"You see Nathan, we are both human," he said.

The boom of the shotgun firing was deafening. It echoed through the swamps. Wesley stumbled backwards, getting dangerously close to the edge. Then his eyes opened, and he realized that he wasn't dead.

He looked straight ahead at Nathan, seeing a little smoke drift from the barrel of the shotgun. Nathan didn't kill him.

Wesley took a step forward, and that's when the pain ripped through his body. Wesley screamed and fell to his knees. He looked down to where his hands clutched his stomach. Blood flowed through his shaking fingers. Wesley lifted his hands away, and saw his intestines slump from within him. He looked down in horror as the organs contained by his stomach fell out.

Wesley screamed again. Nathan walked up to him, and pumped the

shotgun. The shell that had killed Wesley ejected from the weapon, and landed in the mud. Wesley looked down at it. Darkness began to creep in at the corners of his vision.

He looked back up to Nathan who stood over him, and Wesley felt more afraid at that moment then ever before in his life.

"You're not a human being you fucker. You are worse than the covenant, worse than the Flood. You've sold out your own people, and for what? Tell me that right now. Why?" Nathan said.

When Wesley didn't answer, Nathan grabbed him by the hair and lifted him to his feet, causing his organs to slip further from his body.

"Go to hell, and give my regards to the devil you mother fucker," Nathan said, and roughly shoved Wesley over the edge of the cliff.

The entire way down, Wesley screamed in utmost agony, then he landed, and his voice was cut off for eternity. Nathan spit over the edge, then walked back into the woodlands of the swamp.

* * *

>A loud roar sounded from overhead. Nathan looked up and saw a pelican dropship. He smiled, in disbelief. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a flair. He lit it, and raised it into the air, signaling to the pilot.<p><p>

The pilot must have seen the blazing light, because suddenly the dropship began to drift downwards. It snapped branches as it broke through the tops of the trees. The landing gear extended, and the ship settled into the muddy ground of the swamp.

At that moment, a bolt of realism struck Nathan, how did the pilot see the flair through the trees. The back of the pelican opened, and the infected elite jumped out, and it's claws tore through Nathan's chest plate, and into the flesh.

Nathan fell backwards, and fired with his shotgun at the same second. The elite was thrown away, nearly blown in half. Nathan laid on the ground, and pumped his shotgun. Blood dribbled from his mouth, but he fired at the Flood warriors that came at him anyway.

One by one, he killed them, pained by the fact that they had all once been human. Then the pilot came from the cockpit. The creature had once been a woman, possibly a beautiful one, now she was misshapen and disfigured. Her arms twirled around in chaotic motions. Nathan didn't have any shells left in his shotgun.

He reached down to his hip, and pulled out his sidearm, and emptied the clip into the ex-pilot's chest, who then fell dead.

Nathan pocketed the weapon, and somehow managed to reload his shotgun. He struggled to his feet, his teeth grinding together in his pain. He stumbled through the forest, haunted by flashing images from his past.

Then he tripped over a root, and fell into a river. The cold water

numbed him almost instantly, and his body was pulled along by the swift current. His blood seeped out into the water, so he was followed by a crimson trail.

His eyes began to flutter, he was losing his grip on consciousness, the world was fading. Before him he saw faces. First it was Kevin's, then Danny's, then Hank's, then Mike's, then Jim's, then Amy's, then finally Wesley's.

At that moment, Nathan wondered if he had been a good person, if he had impacted people's lives and helped them, or if he was just a passing flicker. Nathan felt a tear slip from his eye, then everything went black.

* * *

>The Elite stood by the river, and looked towards the horizon. The past little while had changed everything in it's life, now it was alone. Around it lay the corpses of his brethren and many flood. The ground was colored purple and yellow with blood.<p><p>

The Covenant was tearing itself apart, the flood were rampaging, and the humans were valiantly defending their very lives. It wasn't until this moment that the elite truly respected the humans. They had stood against the Covenant for numerous years, and had slain legions of warriors despite the fact that their planets were being scorched.

The elite heard something behind it, so it turned to look down into the river, where the body of a human was washed up onto the shore. It was badly wounded, and could possibly die at any moment, but was still alive.

The elite pulled the marine from the numbing waters, and pulled it towards a fire he had constructed earlier. He could begin repaying humanity for everything he had done with this one life.

Hope was not something that the elite felt often, because he had always been so confident. But he felt it now, it flowed through his veins. Maybe everything would be okay in the end.

The end game was nearing, and everyone had to be prepared for it.

End
file.